EDITORIALS—LETTERS
NEWS FEATURES

New York Tribune

TRAVEL—SHIPPING
RADIO—AUTOS

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Fixed and Unfixed Wages

Senator Cummins, the principal author of the Cummins-Esch law, said on April 17, when an amendment clarifying the Labor Board section was under consideration:

"My view of it is that here are two men, and one man may agree to work for the other at any wage that he would be willing to accept, whether it is just and reasonable or not; but when organized society comes to fixing the wage it is no more right to fix a wage below the point of living, and comfortable living, than it is to fix a return on capital below a reasonable point."

When it is said that a man willing to work should have a wage sufficient to maintain himself and his family, debate ends. No humane or intelligent person will deny that the laborer is worthy of his hire, or deny that something is wrong when he doesn't get it.

But when attempt is made to define the living standard or to translate its demands into dollars, debate at once begins. No one knows what the standard is or what money is needed to meet it. From decade to decade, from year to year, the standard changes, and likewise changes the purchasing power of money. Viewing events through a considerable arc of time, it can be seen whether the standard rises or falls. Thus we know that a man now gets vastly more than the man of a hundred years ago. We have progressed from $200 as the annual income of a head of a family in 1800 to something between $1,800 and $2,000 in 1920.

But whether the level falls or rises in particular years is not revealed. The statistics which we quote are practically valueless. For example, the claim of investigators that $2,000 is the minimum cost of family maintenance at the present standards bumps against the cold fact that the average income, including rich as well as poor, is now less than $2,000. Tables of figures carefully prepared by social workers represent merely a waste of effort.

Seemingly recognizing all this, Senator Cummins invokes a special principle when the government fixes wages. Then wages, he holds, must be compensatory, even as the return on capital used for public purposes must be compensatory. It may be all right for those who have their wages fixed to enjoy special privileges, provided there are not too many of them. But if they are millions in number the extra they get may break the backs of the unprivileged. There is thus a limit to the application of the Senator's legalistic idea.

Courtesy by Mail

A writer in a Panama paper of recent date describes seeing a letter written by a prominent South American business house and addressed to a well known American concern. It was neatly typewritten in faultless Spanish, worded in the usual polite Spanish terms. It requested information about prices on certain goods which the South American house wished to buy.

On the bottom, scrawled in pencil and signed by a representative of the American house, was the following note: "If you will kindly write this in English we may be in a position to fill your order. Yours," etc.

The South American house when the letter was thus returned decided to do business with a European firm.

Although this may well be an extreme case, it is undoubtedly true that many American exporters pay too little attention to form and courtesy. In this particular instance the writer of the penciled note never stopped to think of the possible effect of his action. Nor did he even go far enough to imagine himself in a like situation and to think what he would do if he had sought to purchase from a South American house and, having written in English, had received his letter back with a penciled note in Spanish asking him to use that language.

Thanks in no small measure to the effects of the cult of "business letters" which swept over the country some years ago, American business men are given to sacrifice everything for directness. Brevity has been at such a premium that it has often hovered between abruptness and downright rudeness.

Recently, it is true, "courtesy" has been the password among many who seek to teach "business letter writing." But the campaign for courtesy still has a long way to go to be thoroughly successful. Especially is this true in the field of foreign trade, for to most Europeans and South Americans our letters seem to lack a quality which they value highly—a proper regard for the formalities and amenities of personal relations.

Compelling a Settlement

The course of the miners and operators is driving straight toward a compulsory adjudication. Each side continues to show a spirit that necessarily strengthens the opposition of the public and so hastens further action by the government.

Each side still hopes that if only it holds out obstinately a long enough time it will win. Each is unwilling voluntarily to submit its cause to outside judgment. "We'll crush them," say the operators of the miners. "We'll show them," is the miners' retort.

But both are battling against a stone wall. The coal industry is of such importance to the country as a whole that its permanent stoppage cannot be tolerated. In disregarding the rights of the public both fail to understand that the public is tiring of their selfishness. The more they hold out the more they strengthen the President's hands.

What the President failed to do gently he will have to do roughly. His patience will soon be exhausted. Compulsory adjudication is inevitable if there is not voluntary arbitration.

An Agreement Worth Millions

With two costly and disastrous strikes unsettling business conditions it is cheering to learn that the Interborough and its employees have continued their agreement as to wages and working conditions for another year.

This understanding, coming at this particular time, is worth many millions of dollars to the people of New York.

Transit strikes in New York mean business paralysis. Thanks to continued meddling by the city administration, the subways now are inadequate to the task imposed upon them. To tie them up with a general strike would be calamitous.

Doubtless, differences exist between the company and its employees. Neither would be quite normal if they were quite content with things as they are.

But both have sunk these differences for the general good, and both will as a consequence profit far more in the next year than if they became involved in a wage war which also would bring disaster upon New York.

The only remaining bar to better transit is the attitude of the city administration, which is far more concerned with its own vanity than it is for the interests of the people who mistakenly put it in office.

Jim Reed and Judas

Kissing statesmen are generally associated with the news from Europe. Only the other day the foreign dispatches described in full how the French Prime Minister, M. Poincaré, kissed M. Viviani warmly on both cheeks amid the applause of the entire French Chamber. They order, Americans explained to themselves, such matters differently in France. Could any one imagine the Secretary of State implanting even a chaste salute upon the brow of Hiram Johnson?

And yet it is now charged that in our own Missouri the junior Senator, a Republican, has kissed the senior Senator, a Democrat, and that this action is only comparable to the kiss of Judas Iscariot! Just why a Republican, even metaphorically speaking, should seek to kiss a Democrat is a mystery, and this mystery is all the greater when it is realized that the Democrat is none other than Jim Reed. It is hard to imagine any one, Republican or Democrat, exercising this privilege.

But it is the Democrats who are especially stirred up. It appears that the affection of the junior Senator from Missouri for his Democratic colleague was such that he polled the sentiment of the Republican leaders of Missouri toward Senator Reed. He evidently found many of them favorably inclined to Reed's renomination by the Democrats and, naïvely pleased with this news, he spread it abroad in the hopes that it might further Reed's chances. "Speaking for myself," said the Republican Senator from Missouri, "I hope my Democratic colleague will be renominated by his party. I recognize his wonderful ability," etc. And for such sentiments as these the Republican Senator is charged with "damnable, pernicious interference in a Democratic primary."

All good Democrats should protest against this iniquitous introduction of an alien custom. Even figuratively speaking the right to kiss Senators always has been questioned, never granted, and should henceforth be prohibited. There is a traditional decorum to be observed between Republicans and Democrats which permits of angry recriminations, but forbids undue displays of affection. Not even Jim Reed is a sufficient cause for transgressing this law.

New Hymns of Hate

The parallelism between recent articles in the Berlin "Deutsche Tageszeitung" and the magazine published in America by George Sylvester Viereck is striking.

The theme is the same in both cases—namely, France, its character and its conduct. The "Tageszeitung" raises the question of whether a Frenchman more resembles a tiger or a gorilla. It reaches the amiable conclusion that he is a mixture of both. France, we are told, has a poisoned race soul and is addicted to the crucifixion of human beings. A Frenchman, it appears, is never so happy as when engaged in nailing a tortured fellow creature to a cross. As fierce as a tiger and as cunning and fiendish as a gorilla, the Frenchman is presented as a vile monster the gentle German is unhappily compelled to tolerate as a neighbor. The "Tageszeitung" appeals to the friends of Germany throughout the world, especially those in America, to spread knowledge concerning the true character of France.

Viereck does his utmost to comply. He begins by saying that "France is the Cain among nations." "Her international manners," he declares, "are those of a pig, a pig clad to the snout in shining armor." Further we learn: "The French may be human beings. Rational beings they are not." And so on and on. Viereck hymns a hate more passionate than that of Lissauer.

Formerly it was the Briton who was to be cursed with every breath. Now there are oily smiles for John Bull and much deprecatory scraping and bowing as he draws near. France has become the abominable one.

Germans, whether in the Fatherland or in other lands, doubtless deem their new propaganda subtle and convincing. Of the amazing things about the amazing German mind nothing is more amazing than the German inability to understand how other folks think.

Yet for Germany so to spurt venom is not all a joke. It impedes world disarmament. It makes almost impossible further reduction of the French military establishment. It justifies French fear that Germany still has a will for war. In every way it postpones reconciliation. Yet, blind with rage, organs which pretend to express German opinion devote themselves to fanning German hate.

Financial Skyrockets

The failure of a Wall Street plunger is not a business failure at all. The plunger is not a business man, but a gambler. He ventures his all on a "100 to 1 shot." If he wins he repeats the process. Sooner or later he is bound to lose, only to acquire another "stake" and go back to the game again.

It is not bad business conditions that bring such men to disaster. They are wrecked as often, if not oftener, in boom times. Usually their downfall is due to their own feverish anxiety to accumulate millions in a few months. Sometimes their operations are so unsettling to legitimate business that the conservative elements find it necessary to repress them.

It is beyond the power of any stock exchange or board of trade, or even any Legislature, to prevent men from speculating if they want to speculate. When, because of position or personal magnetism or inherited wealth, they are able to persuade others to take the same chances there is little that can be done.

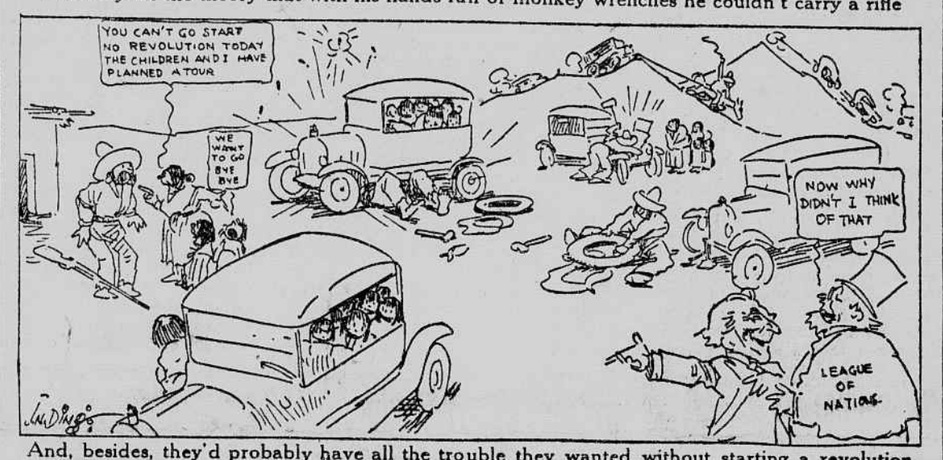
No law can prevent a man from bringing about his own ruin. All that can be done is to provide and enforce penalties for the willful ruin of others, and it is seldom that the plunger has any intention to involve others in the misfortunes he is willing to risk for the sake of a chance at big winnings.

There is abundant prosperity in this country to-day. Carefully conducted brokerage houses operate with full confidence in the future. Crooked bucketshops and adventurous speculators crash now and then, whether times are bad or good. But every such crash clears the financial atmosphere and eventually brings about better conditions for legitimate business.

AT LAST A PEACEFUL SUBSTITUTE FOR WAR

Henry Ford proposes to pacify Mexico with a flivver factory

Probably on the theory that with his hands full of monkey wrenches he couldn't carry a rifle



And, besides, they'd probably have all the trouble they wanted without starting a revolution

The Vanished Wit of Yesterday

By James L. Ford

In a praiseworthy effort to inform itself regarding the value of current critical acumen, "The Literary Digest" sent to a number of experts a request to name "the five leading American literary stars that have risen above the horizon in the last ten years." The results of this symposium, printed in the "Digest's" current issue, are well worth thoughtful consideration.

They show that of the thirty-three answers received from the critics to whom the questionnaire was addressed Joseph Hergesheimer secured 22 votes, Eugene O'Neill 14, Sherwood Anderson 13, Willa Sibert Cather 12 and Robert Frost and James Branch Cabell 8 each. There were also many others who received from 1 to 7 votes, the last named number going to Edgar Lee Masters and 6 to Sinclair Lewis and Edna St. Vincent Millay. Carl Sandburg, Hendrik Van Loon and E. A. Robinson had but 5 votes and Scott Fitzgerald and Amy Lowell 4.

I am of opinion that these figures represent not only expert critical judgment but popular current taste as well, and we cannot study them without being convinced of the honesty of the criticism which is sufficiently apparent to insure all writers of fair play if not of the fervent eulogy so dear to the human soul. Evidences of the continued vogue of the soothing art of log-rolling are so few that they are not worth counting.

But this mass of testimony reveals a popular trend toward the serious and realistic forms of literature that belies our much-vaunted reputation as "a nation of humorists." Whatever the talents of the winners in the contest, they have certainly contrived to hide their wit and humor in the napkin of solemnity.

Among the scattering ballots that follow the chosen few only three are for that genuine wit, Don Marquis, and one for Edna Ferber, whose short tales of life "on the road" are distinctly humorous, and one for Dorothy Parker, whose satiric gifts are not as yet widely known as they deserve. The thought that American wit and humor have gone into eclipse is depressing to those of us who love our country and are proud of its literary traditions. When we remember that that most illustrious of American wits and statesmen, Benjamin Franklin, stayed the hand with which he was in the act of signing the Declaration of Independence to found a school of native humor, thus shaking off at the same moment our allegiance to England's jokes as well as to her rule, it is melancholy to think that a school which has proved wit and wisdom to be nearly synonymous has lost its hold on our public.

The saying, apparently paradoxical, that the humorist's calling is a serious one is nevertheless quite true, and the present decline in its vogue must be a matter of regret to all understanding persons who have the nation's welfare at heart. It is impossible to enumerate within the brief limits of this paper the many instances in which public opinion has been swayed by earnest humorists working for the right.

A striking example of the power of wit couched in poetic and literary form is found in "The Bigelow Papers," which were virtually political pamphlets from the witty pen of James Russell Lowell, directed largely against the conduct of the Mexican War. The Civil War produced humorists like Petroleum V. Nasby, Orpheus C. Kerr and other political writers who were largely quoted at that time. It also revealed to us the humor of Abraham Lincoln, on whose shoulders the mantle of Benjamin Franklin had fallen, and whose jocose remarks confirmed the theory that wit and wisdom are synonymous terms.

George William Curtis, usually regarded as a gentle humorist, also must be credited with the influence he undoubtedly exerted during the Civil War and the period of the Tweed ring that followed it. In the "Potiphar Papers" he ridiculed ante-bellum snobbery and pretense, but as the war clouds gathered his pen became more bitterly satirical and under his editorship "Harper's Weekly" gained a nation-wide influence. Even more effective than its patriotic efforts in behalf of the Union was its course during the years of municipal corruption, extravagance and vulgarity that live in the annals of New York as its Flash Age.

It is difficult for the present generation to comprehend the extent of the power acquired by Tweed and his associates at this time or the amount of their lootings from the city treasury. Still more amazing is the tolerance with which their spoliation was regarded by many citizens of repute. The part played by Mr. Curtis and Thomas Nast in the breaking up of this ring and the sending of Tweed to prison and the most notorious of his fellow thieves into exile cannot be overestimated, and lives in the history of the town as an example of the powers of wit when put to a useful purpose. The cartoons of Nast have never been excelled in recent times. Drawing was not his long suit, but he had what is termed in the craft a "cartooning mind"; in other words, a capacity for seeing the situation of the moment in dramatic form and putting it on paper.

"Puck" began in the late 70's to continue the fight against humbug and corruption, and soon became a journal of national interest. With the exception of Keppler its writers and artists were very young men—so young, in fact, that humor gushed from them readily and was not strained. Keppler's cartoons were of biting power, and he may be said to have founded a distinct school of that art. But it should be remembered that he had the assistance of an unusually brilliant staff, to whom his rough sketches were submitted at the weekly council and whose suggestions were often of great value. Cleveland acknowledged in his later years that he owed his election to the Presidency in 1884 largely to "Puck." It was a rather crude and vitriolic wit, expressed on more than one occasion in a striking cartoon, that enabled an editor of very recent years to pick the choicest plum from the diplomatic basket.

With these and many other similar facts to guide them, the tendency of those who found weeklies designed to influence public opinion to pin their faith on almost any quality save wit seems astounding. Cartoonists still exist, but most of the so-called cartoons printed to-day are merely pictures, devoid of the essential elements of drama.

Mr. Marquis, who received but three votes out of ten times that number, possesses gifts that entitle him to far higher consideration at critical hands, but he may console himself with the knowledge that the American public gives him a much more distinguished rating. His humor is fresh, and I often wonder at its abundance. His Hermione and Archy the cockroach are creations that entitle him to a high place. Housekeepers who read this popular insect's *vers libre* are more kindly inclined to his contemporaries of the sink and closet. It has been said of more than one satirist that he "hits folly as it flies," but Mr. Marquis hits it before it can spread its wings.

Nothing would please me more than to see a renaissance of American wit and humor, but I do not know how this is to be brought about. Committees of the sort assembled for every imaginable purpose, and which command a degree of popular respect that seems amazing to the sophisticated, are powerless in the matter. Not even in those great universities that offer elective courses in nearly everything from playwriting to plumbing is there a chair of wit and humor; and, while every variety of humbug and rascality rears its head without fear of consequences, the sword of ridicule, the only weapon of real strength in the fight against evil, is permitted to rust in its scabbard.

German Payment in Bonds

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: I notice the recent editorial in your paper entitled "Germany Can Pay." Of course Germany can pay, but even your figures are more than generous in favor of Germany. Right after the war the "New Republic" published an article regarding Germany's ability to pay, and I answered it by saying that an indemnity bill of one hundred billions levied against Germany and Austria would not be abnormally heavy.

The trouble with the present situation is that the people who are handling the question of indemnity do not understand the first principles of economics. What should have been done and what should be done would be to compel Germany to issue a block of German bonds to cover the entire legitimate bill of damages, and these bonds should be payable on or before fifty years after date. In order to make the proceeds immediately available they should have been guaranteed by all of the powers interested, including the United States.

The attempt to collect cash from Germany at present is as foolish as taking the tools from a carpenter when you expect him to work out a debt that he owes to you. You cannot rob Germany of her working capital and still expect her to pay an indemnity such as should be levied against her. The actual cash now in Germany should be left there in order that Germany may be supplied with working capital with which to carry on trade and business and pay a proper bill of indemnity.

GUY M. WALKER.

New York, July 19, 1922.

The Tariff Out of Politics

Need of a Commission of Business Men Regardless of Party

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: The tariff discussion follows its course in the Senate. Conflicting interests face one another and from the galleries a visitor may well imagine that he listens to a village contest organized by the local debating society.

From time immemorial the tariff issue has been a political issue, just as it is to-day. It would be absurd to deny it. Regularly the platform contains a plank "for revenue only" on the Democratic side, while the Republicans "affirm their belief in the protective principle, and pledge themselves to revise the tariff as soon as conditions shall make it necessary for the preservation of the home market for American labor, agriculture and industry." It is upon such a platform that Mr. Harding was elected President in 1920.

With all that The Tribune, a stanch Republican newspaper, says, "If President Harding stands for re-election it is scarcely fair to handicap him as was President Taft in 1912 by the Payne-Aldrich act." This statement deserves more than passing notice in view of the fact that the proposed new schedules are higher than were the schedules of the Payne-Aldrich act; so that, look at it as we may, politics is the main factor in the making of a tariff.

It is not a necessary evil; politics, as the word goes, could be very well eliminated from this economic bill. How? Simply by appointing a committee composed of business men. Men of training representing every phase of commercial life, men who for the time being forget that they are Democrats or Republicans and remember above all that they are assembled for the benefit of the country at large and not for the benefit of certain interests only.

A tariff that is favorable to American commerce and industry need not necessarily be a tariff directed against other nations. That is the only way to avoid a tariff war. Tariff war means retaliation and retaliation spells disaster.

No nation can afford to assume such a responsibility; the only creditor nation in the world, America, is in a position permitting her to set an example based on the axiom: "Live and let live."

EMILE UTARD.

New York, July 17, 1922.

The Memorial in the Park

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: There is only one place to put the Memorial, and that is on the unused rocks between Seventh Avenue and Broadway on Fifty-ninth Street, taking 100 feet of Central Park, not more, and 400 feet on Fifty-ninth Street.

The front should be toward the north, with a fine esplanade in front; the rear entrance on Fifty-ninth Street, making the opera house to accommodate 4,000 people. Music in the center, art and science on the wings, east and west.

These rocks are no necessary part of the park at present and ought to be utilized for the people. There is nothing forbidding in the good sentiment "don't encroach on the park," as this does not take away any available use of the park and leaves it as it is, with a magnificent memorial on the south side balancing the Metropolitan Museum on the east.

Why not? It's the people's park and the city must furnish the land—the building costing, say, ten million only, instead of thirty million, as proposed.

I advocate turning the old reservoir on the north end of the park into a stadium where concerts can be given, pageants and plays—a place for uplift, to improve the taste of our citizens.

I also would like to see the ill-smelling animal houses removed or rebuilt at the lower end of the park and the Arsenal torn down or replaced by a beautiful greenhouse.

J. S. WOOD.

New York, July 17, 1922.

A Natural Discovery

(From The Louisville Courier-Journal)

The fellow who complains that the newspapers print nothing but news of crime, vice and divorce court scandals can tell you just what has been printed that upholds his argument, but in nine cases in ten his avid eye has failed to find the important news of the day, displayed more prominently.

A Week of Verse

Sonnet

(From Voices)

YOU are the faintest freckles on the hide
Of fawns; the hoofprint stamped into the slope
Of slithering glaciers by the antelope;
The silk upon the mushroom's under side
Constricts you, and your eyelashes are wide
In pools uptilted on the hills; you grope
For swings of water twisted to a rope
Over a ledge where amber pebbles glide.

Shelley perceived you on the Caucasus;
Blake prisoned you in glassy grains of sand
And Keats in goblin jars from Samarcand;
Poor Coleridge found you in a poppy-seed;
But you escape the clutching most of us,
Shaped like a ghost, and imminent with speed.

ELINOR WYLIE.

Hedges

(From Broom)

HEDGES have good manners . . . imposing order . . .

Things grow straight
and keep in place
and breeds don't mix.
White buds stay white
and red stay red
with no indecent streaking
in the flower.

Cedars have room
to shape themselves rotundly. . . .
There are shears for vines
that rise by easy handholds.

But even a garden remembers . . .
remembers the thick choking,
the strangling climbers
blossoming scarlet above tense quivers.

Oh, the long straight rise to the sun!
Oh, the rough winds from the snows! . . .
the trampling,
the crowding,
the wild sap,
the unhampered seeding!

Hedges have good manners . . .
things grow straight in rows.
Weak things bloom free—
certain slow and strong things
wait the gardener's passing.

HENRY BELLAMAN.

On Silent Wings

(From Harper's Magazine)

THERE is a flock of weary birds, that go
Not south, but westward, with the dying days;
They fly in silence through the twilight ways,
Sounding no call of joy, no cry of woe.
One after one, like some thin river's flow,
The line goes on, athwart the morning rays,
Through the clear noonday, or the stormy haze,
Still winging toward oblivion, mute and slow.

No eyes shall follow them with kindling sight,
And none shall know the seas where they are tost,
When their spent pinions shall at last be furled
From the long striving of their hopeless flight;
For these are loves denied, and friendships lost,
And all the unwanted treasures of the world.

MARION COUTHOUY SMITH.

What Was Mine

(From The Smart Set)

THE song you sing is my song,
But what is that to you?
For I am but a shadow
The wind blows through.

I am but a name, a face,
And yet the song you sing
Is the one you taught to me
In another spring.

How could you forget so soon?
Yet what is that to me
Since I have forgotten you,
And we are free?

So why should I be weeping
When all is said and done,
For a little song you sing
To another one?

ABIGAIL CRESSON.

Ego

(From The New Republic)

WHAT though the world rolls round for untold years,
While seas, through æons, toss their sands ashore,
Tracing old tales of time on ocean's floor,
Sifting more salt than dries in all our tears?
What though the winds the tallest pine tree hears
Still sing the songs they sang long time before,
Winding through stars a million years or more,
As whirling mist on meadows clouds and clears?
What comfort lies in this for heart and will?
I cannot live their length—fragile my prime,
Brief is my noon—so let the long lived hill
Endure the storms; its grass and snow are one.
Oh, let my days, that fill my short lifetime,
Be clovery sweet and bright beneath the sun!

ELISABETH WILKINS THOMAS.